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RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE  
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
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SUBJECT: Read-out on Climate Change Meeting (Dominican Republic)

REF: 11/27/09 EMAIL FROM FRANCES COLON OF WHA

¶1. EconOff delivered the demarche on the UGS's position on the Copenhagen Climate Change meetings on 12/2/09, to Victor Garcia, Office Director, and Carol Franco, Environmental Economist, for the National Climate Change Council. The GoDR plans to send approximately 20 delegates to Copenhagen. The two primary delegates are Jaime David, Secretary of State for the Environment and Omar Ramirez, Vice-President of the National Climate Change Council - both of whom were out of the country. In addition to GoDR officials, the Copenhagen delegation will also include two representatives from Dominican NGOs.

¶2. EconOff received positive feedback on the USG's emissions reductions targets and the apparent dedication of the USG to address climate change as demonstrated by President Obama's presence in Copenhagen. The President's plan to promote a green economy was particularly well received. Garcia and Franco opined that sustainably developed economies, rather than growth-at-all-costs economies, are the way to a climate-friendly future. GoDR officials were aware of the USD 10 billion that will be available in 2012 for adaptation and mitigation, but questioned how, when, and where the funds will be made available. Of particular concern to the GoDR they explained, are the adaption costs. The officials described one scenario under consideration where rising sea levels result in seawater intrusion of an underground aquifer in the southeast DR. Once the groundwater becomes salinated, the GoDR would be faced with constructing an aqueduct more than 100 miles long from the northern, mountainous region to the population centers of the southeast.

¶3. The DR delegation to Copenhagen will bring a handbook outlying the GoDR climate change strategies. (Santo Domingo staff are in communication with GoDR officials in Copenhagen to complete the document. Once it is available it, they promised to provide EconOff with a copy.) Garcia and Franco said that one of the challenges facing the DR, and other developing countries, is communication. In a country where the average citizen goes to school only through the sixth grade, communicating the risks and potential solutions to climate change will present challenges. GoDR officials expect that the Government of Haiti will be even less prepared to handle food and water shortages which may lead to increased illegal immigration by Haitians and a consequent rise in demand for Dominican social services.

¶4. The GoDR officials said they were also considering involvement in the REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and

Forest Degradation) program. They specifically mentioned reforestation of mangrove forests and protection of border-forests as two focal points. With the goal of developing a 15-20 year action plan, the GoDR would like to fund pilot projects in three key sectors that demonstrate that mitigation/adaptation can help ensure the long-term viability of the DR's economic engines:

- \* Tourism-demonstrating the importance of the sustainable use of resources

- \* Energy - diversifying the energy matrix

- \* Hydrology - protecting resources for consumption and agricultural production

15. COMMENT: The GoDR is clearly well-versed in climate change issues and on the dangers climate change poses for the country. While the officials we talked to addressed practical and operational matters, it remains unclear what the GoDR's political position will be in Copenhagen. We will follow-up with Garcia and Franco on obtaining a final copy of their climate change strategies. For their part, Garcia and Franco promised to share the USG perspective with the delegation leaders already in Copenhagen. END COMMENT  
Lambert